DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 313 060 JC 890 538

AUTHOR Sutherland, Mark J.
TITLE Community College Faculty: Why Do They Write What They Write? (And Why Do They Write at All?)
PUB DATE 6 Dec 89
NOTE 14p.; Graduate seminar paper, University of California, Los Angeles.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Community Colleges; *Faculty Publishing; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Motivation; Two Year Colleges; Writing for Publication

ABSTRACT

An analysis of 10 journal articles written by community college instructors revealed marked similarities in the authors' topics, writing styles, basic assumptions, data sources, and motivations to write. The authors focused their writing on curricular matters within their academic fields, using general teacher journals and teacher journals in specific academic areas as their primary sources. The instructors' choice of topics may have been influenced by the following factors: (1) the classroom is the domain of the instructor; (2) instructors teach because they truly enjoy it; (3) publishing an article on classroom instruction may serve as an outlet for communicating teaching methods and ideas to colleagues; (4) satisfaction comes from knowing that ideas are valued by peers; (5) writing about instruction is a possible way to limit curricular decisionmaking to the realm of the instructor; (6) instructors may have been encouraged by administrators to write about their classroom approaches to improve the prestige of their community college; and (7) educational journals actively solicit paper submissions. By writing, the well-integrated instructor may be attempting to fill a void in his/her professional life, break free from the established dichotomy between research and instruction, or avoid professional stagnation. (VVC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED313060

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY:

WHY DO THEY WRITE WHAT THEY WRITE?

(AND WHY DO THEY WRITE AT ALL?)

Mark J. Sutherland

University of California, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, CA 90024

December 6, 1989

JC 890 538

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. J. Sutherland

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY: WHY DO THEY WRITE WHAT THEY WRITE? (AND WHY DO THEY WRITE AT ALL?)

After having analyzed ten journal articles written by community college instructors (Bailey, 1982-83; Mitchell, 1985; Harper and Lively, 1987; Schwartzman, 1987; Ashworth, 1988; Dodson, 1988; Ediger, 1988; Holladay, 1988; Kuhn, 1988; Squitieri, 1988), I discovered a marked similarity in the authors' article topics, writing styles, basic assumptions, and data sources. Perhaps more revealing, though, is a consideration of the instructor's motivations for how and what he writes (and for writing at all). If we can understand the personalities and the self-perceived roles of the community college faculty who write, we may be able to differentiate them from the remaining faculty and predict which is more likely to successfully serve its students.

All of the authors except two (Ashworth and Dodson) assumed that their reading audiences were teachers, since all wrote about some aspect of classroom instruction. Perhaps the polarity between teachers and administration has produced a teaching force which feels that only communication between its members is desired or indeed necessary.

Those same eight authors dealt with the subject areas of the their expertise in a pure sense (except for one who proposed methods to integrate writing into a biology course). They also outlined specific student objectives based on some suggested curricular organization (i.e. what should be happening *in the classroom*). In each of these cases, the author used the same expository writing style to describe his/her methods of instruction, and four of the eight listed specific objectives or learning outcomes similar to those in a daily lesson plan.

Similar data sources provided support for the instructors' reports. They were primarily teacher journals, teacher journals in specific academic areas, and journals

in the specific academic disciplines with fewer references from educational philosophy articles (with the exception of the two previously noted). There was the tendency to present little data or documentation of the effects of the instructional methods utilized, since instructors' expectations (i.e. the reorganization of students' lives) were often unrealistic. Data and documentation are potential revealers of such unrealistic expectations and could lead to instructor despair.

What is the motivation for this apparent focus by community college instructors/authors on the teacher, student, and curriculum? The following are a number of possibilities with supporting (or contradicting) evidence from the literature.

1. **The classroom is the domain of the instructor.**: The classroom is where the instructor earns his/her "daily bread". He/she feels that "the privateness and the self-sufficiency of teachers in a classroom is a cherished part of teaching (Purdy, 1973 as cited by Cohen and Brawer, 1977, p. 101)." The classroom is what the instructor knows best, because he is a student-centered individual. In fact, Cohen and Brawer showed that "instructors with a high orientation toward research tend also to show a high concern for students (1977, p. 55)."

2. **The instructor is teaching because he truly enjoys it.**: If this is so, then, naturally, the art of instruction is what he/she chooses to discuss. This assumption is supported by studies of community college instructor satisfaction which indicate that "the faculty who tend to care more about their students are also highly satisfied, well-integrated individuals. They care about their teaching, not much for [discipline-related] research (Cohen

and Brawer, 1977, p. 51)." Significantly, these well-integrated individuals also ranked high in Cohen and Brawer's "research orientation" Faculty Survey construct (1977, p.38).

3. **Publishing an article on classroom instruction may serve as a communicative outlet to provide colleagues with examples of "what works" for an instructor.**: Instructors have so little time to swap ideas that they often "substitute quick greetings in the hall for meaningful collegial exchanges (Seidman, 1985, p. 249)." The few opportunities that instructors have to communicate with one another are cherished as a result. An instructor from the Miami-Dade community college system wrote that she "found enormous satisfaction in sharing a sandwich with a colleague from another school who happened to be making the same kinds of discoveries [she] was making (Altshuler, 1973, p. 3)." However, this may not be a valid assumption to explain instructors' motivations for writing, because, in general, only a minority of instructors appear to desire such communication (Purdy, 1974). One instructor stated, "I don't need my writing for professional development here. People don't say, 'Hey, I read your article in last month's *Historical Review*. It was great.' People at this institution are generally not receptive to that type of thing (Seidman, 1985, p. 261)."

4. **Since few individuals besides the students actually witness what occurs in their classrooms, instructors would understandably seek the satisfaction that comes from knowing that their ideas are valued by their peers.**: Few instructors receive positive reinforcement from their administrators, so they may attempt to seek it by

publishing papers. In a survey performed by Carleo, "Recognition for work that is superior in quality was mentioned by 18 faculty, 15 of whom felt they did not receive deserved recognition in their current situations (1989, p. 177)." This lack of extrinsic recognition means that these instructors "must have their own internalized justification for their work (Cohen and Brawer, 1972, p. 145)." Perhaps this comes in the form of published papers.

5. **Writing about classroom instruction is a possible technique to limit curricular decision-making to the realm of the instructor.**: With the increasing dependency of the community colleges on state funding has come the shift of curricular management away from the faculty. The faculty, of course, has responded with resistance:

> Many instructors translate the idea of academic freedom as 'my right to do what I want in my class.' Further, Purdy [1973] related how 'Instructors would only accept advice from someone else who had gone through the fires, experienced the traumas and successes of teaching. Recommendations about a new teaching method coming from faculty members are more likely to be considered by teachers while information presented by administrators...can be ignored. (Cohen and Brawer, 1977, pp. 101-102.)

This insistence to control the curriculum may also be an attempt to provide the instructor with a sense of self-worth--a reason to justify his/her choice to become a community college instructor. According to Cohen and Brawer, "...a faculty member's feeling of self-worth depends in great measure on being left alone to fuse content and style of teaching... (1982, p. 83).

6. **Since the instructor has little time to do academic research, he/she writes only for what he has time--what he is already**

doing in the classroom.: The time required to prepare and present class materials, provide access for student assistance, and tend to committee responsibilities leaves little time for research, especially if it requires either the accumulation of field data away from the college or money. In reference to the community college faculty's student-centered attitude, Garrison stated that "there is no doubt that it is time consuming, and thus, not so eventually, expensive. Not the least part of the expense is the reduction of time and opportunity for teachers to keep themselves refreshed and up-to-date in their own disciplines (1967 as cited by Seidman, 1985, pp. 100-101)." One interviewed instructor said, "There are times it's very discouraging, because you know what has to be done. You know intellectually that you cannot do what needs to be done if you have five classes. It simply cannot be done....It isn't because I am inept. It's simply because the conditions mediate against it (Seidman, 1985, p. 253)."

7. **An instructor may have been encouraged by administrators to publish an article in order to improve the prestige of their community college.**: The improvement of the community college's status in the eyes of instructors from other community colleges and of instructors and counselors from secondary schools who feed students to the community college may be motivation enough for administrators to encourage their faculty members to write. However, all evidence from the literature indicates the opposite. Seidman interviewed an instructor who said, "In the junior college there is no publish or perish. You are not expected to write, to research. By doing research and writing, you are even allowing suspicion; that is to say, 'What is this guy up to?'....The whole approach is that we are here in order to teach, and teaching is unrelated to the life of

the mind, apparently. There is a cloud that descends and it says, 'You don't have to do research (1985, p. 164).'" Another said, "It's certainly not from some outer pressure that they write. In fact, we've had faculty who were running off on the mimeograph here something for a book they were writing, and they've been told not to do it because it was school property. Somehow the administrators don't see that at all being related to competency in the teacher (Seidman, 1985, pp. 260-261)." Apparently, the only indication of any positive influences from administration is the potential for an instructor to latch onto an administrator's pet innovation, apply it in the classroom, and write about it in a journal (perhaps to gain favor from the administrator). "These 'innovative' instructors have picked up the appropriate cues: 'Make it look as though you are willing to try every new gimmick that the dean hears about and he will think you are great (Cohen and Brawer, 1972, p. 32)!"

8. **A published paper may have originated as a presentation at an educational conference.**: Professional organizational conferences that feature instructional themes attract the instructors interest whether he/she is attending or presenting. "Because junior college instructors tend to orient themselves to their subject matter rather than to their disciplines, they are much more likely to join an organization devoted to the practice of teaching in their particular field...than one that is pointed toward disciplinary research (Friedman, 1967 as cited by Cohen and Brawer, 1972, p. 138)." According to Hill (1976), outstanding community college faculty are nearly twice as likely to perform and publish research compared to their colleagues. In addition, "not only are [they] more likely to belong to one or more professional organizations, but...they are more likely to have attended

a regional or national meeting, and they are also more likely to have presented a paper at an organization meeting (p. 34)."

9. **Because they sell their journals to teachers who are most interested in "instructional papers", educational journal editors actively solicit paper submissions.**: Little data supports the connection between paper solicitations and their potential for motivating instructors' writing. However, Hill did find that outstanding instructors (i.e. the ones who tended to publish) read more periodicals of all types (discipline-oriented, professional, and general interest) compared to their colleagues, but that "the results were statistically significant only for professional journals (1976, p. 31)." Therefore, these instructors are more likely to respond to paper solicitations since they are more likely to be exposed to them.

The items summarized above are potential factors that motivate community college instructors to write about curricular matters within their own academic areas. But what motivates these individuals to write at all? Clearly there has been little, if any, pressure from colleagues and administrators to publish their ideas or their "classroom-based" research. Furthermore, these instructors receive no extrinsic rewards, either verbally or monetarily, for their considerable work. Apparently there are other, more intrinsic, reasons for writing. These reasons may be a reflection of the instructor/author personality. If so, they may provide a means to evaluate an instructor's potential for teaching success.

Brawer (1976) developed a psychological construct called "functional potential" that was erected on the constructs of development, maturity, and ego strength. By analyzing instructors' responses to questions pertaining to relatedness / aloofness,

identity / amorphism, flexibility / rigidity, independence / dependence, progression / regression, and delay of satisfaction / impulse expression, she constructed an image of the high "functional potential" instructor. "Those in the high group tend to be more involved in everything around them; in fact, 'functional potential' correlates significantly with all the following constructs: 'research orientation,' 'curriculum and instruction,' 'university as reference group,' 'preference for further preparation,' 'concern for students,' and 'concern with the humanities'--all the constructs used in the Faculty Survey except for 'satisfaction' (Cohen and Brawer, 1977, p. 38)."

This analysis provides a useful image of the high "functional potential" community college instructor. He/she is more likely to publish his/her writing, has a tendency "to read more scholarly and professional journals, and...[is] more likely to be [a member] of professional associations (Cohen and Brawer, 1977, p. 37)." Therefore, it appears that the instructors who present papers in journals and at conferences also possess high "functional potential" ratings. However, because these high "functional potential" instructors rank low in "satisfaction", there seems to be a void in their professional lives that they attempt to fill by writing.

By writing, the well-integrated instructors attempt to break free from the established dichotomy between research and instruction. "...The consequences of separating research from teaching plague their teaching efforts,...affect their aspirations and sense of themselves, undermine their intellectual energy, and conflict with a major source of satisfaction and renewal that should be available to all teachers as part of their work (Seidman, 1985, p. 253)." Their concerns for their students and the curriculum are not diminished by their desire to perform research. On the contrary, these faculty members "pursued innovation in [their] own teaching...out of a sense of professional obligation and a dedication to the belief that [they] can help [their] students learn more if [they modify their techniques] from the lecture/discussion/recital mode (Cohen and Brawer, 1977, p. 105)."

Perhaps these instructors are less satisfied than their colleagues because they aspire to higher goals and believe that they cannot attain them at the junior college as it is presently organized. "Many readily admit they would really rather teach in a four-year college or university than in the two-year college. Apparently, the university--or more accurately, the junior college instructor's perception of it--still carries a golden aura (Cohen and Brawer, 1977, p. 81)."

If the outstanding (Hill, 1976) and high "functional potential" (Brawer, 1976) instructors are those that write and publish, is it realistic to assume that extrinsic rewards (i.e. merit pay) could be provided for such exercises? Perhaps, but the character of the community college as an institution must be considered in the proposal. Community college instructors, traditionally, have perceived themselves as teachers only. The writing instructor would likely face opposition from his non-writing colleagues as well as from the administrators who also perceive him/her solely as an instructor. His/her job is to instruct the masses and to do little else.

What, then, are the alternatives for the outstanding/high "functional potential" instructors? Most likely they will either relocate to the four-year institutions or they will choose to isolate themselves within the two-year college, lose faith in the institution in which they envisioned so much promise, and become more and more like their colleagues--an increasingly uninspired lot. Only with some form of recognition will these instructors find a satisfying place within the community college framework.

When a community college instructor writes, he does so for a purpose. It may be to communicate with colleagues, elicit kudos, or obtain self-satisfaction. Regardless of the purpose, however, all writing instructors seems to need the challenges that

research and writing offer. Without them, the two-year colleges provide these instructors with little except stagnation and, ultimately, dead ends.

REFERENCES

Altshuler, T. "From a Professional Instructor." *Toward a Professional Faculty.* New Directions for Community Colleges 1 (spring), 1973, p. 1-8.

Ashworth, T. E. "Improving the Effectiveness of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges." *Community Services Catalyst,* v. 18, no. 3, 1988, pp. 15-18.

Bailey, K. E. "A Political Philosophy Approach to Teaching American Politics." *Community College Social Science Journal,* v.4, no. 3 (spring), 1982-83, pp. 26-30.

Brawer, F. B. *Functional Potential: A New Approach to Viewing Faculty.* Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 1976.

Carleo, A. S. W. *Job Satisfaction Among Full-Time Faculty in the Los Angeles Community College District.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989.

Cohen, A. M., and F. B. Brawer. *Confronting Identity: The Community College Instructor.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1972.

Cohen, A. M., and F. B. Brawer. *The Two-Year College Instructor Today.* New York: Praeger, 1977.

Cohen, A. M., and F. B. Brawer. *The American Community College.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Dodson, R. R. "Quality and Accessibility: Are they Mutually Exclusive?" *Community College Review,* v. 14, no. 4, 1988, pp. 56-60.

Ediger, M. *Teaching History in the Junior College.* Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 1988.

Friedman, N. L. "The Subject Matterist's Orientation Toward Field of Academic Specialization." *The American Sociologist,* v. 2, 1967, pp. 12-15.

Garrison, R. *Junior College Faculty: Issues and Problems.* Washington, D. C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1967.

Harper, J., and M. Lively. "Conversation Classes: Activities and Materials that Encourage Participation." *Foreign Language Annals,* v. 20, no. 4, 1987, pp. 337-344.

Hill, A. W. *Characteristics of Outstanding Community College Faculty.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976.

Holladay, S. "Integrating Reading and Writing." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College,* v. 15, no. 10, 1988, pp. 187-194.

Kuhn, D. J. "An Assessment of Nursing Students' Knowledge of and Misconceptions about Aging." *Community/Junior College Quarterly*, v. 12, 1988, pp. 55-63.

Mitchell, V. L. "Creative Alternative to Lecture: Parley with the Past." *AACJC Journal*, v. 56, no. 6, 1985, pp. 32-35.

Purdy, L. N. *A Case Study of Acceptance and Rejection of Innovation by Faculty in a Community College*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1973.

Purdy, L. *Faculty in an Innovative Community College*. Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 1974.

Schwartzman, S. "Multiplicative Squares: Magic and Special." *Mathematics Teacher*, v. 80, no. 1, 1987, pp. 51-54.

Seidman, E. *In the Words of the Faculty: Perspectives on Improving Teaching and Educational Quality in Community Colleges*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.

Squitieri, L. "Cue: How to Get Started Writing in Anatomy and Physiology." *Journal of College Science Teaching*, v. 18, no. 2, 1988, pp. 279-280.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges